September 1991

# The Probe, Issue 114 - September 1991

The Probe
ISSUE 114
SEPTEMBER 1991

# Defining the Future for ADC

*Robert H. Schmidt, Editor, The Probe*

What is the proper role of the USDA-APHIS Animal Damage Control (ADC) program in today's society? Is the management of the ADC program flexible enough to allow it to respond to emerging issues in a timely manner? Are the techniques and philosophies utilized appropriate and effective? Finally, are the professional standards for all ADC employees recognized by their peers and by the public?

Under the leadership of Bobby R. Acord, Deputy Administrator for USDA-APHIS-ADC, ADC is subjecting itself to intense scrutiny in an all out effort to define the program's strengths, weaknesses, and opportunities. According to Acord, "As leaders, we must look for ways to build on our successes and embrace changes necessary to deal with the challenges of the future."

ADC has completed the preparation of an internal strategic plan which identified major problems facing the program and proposed solutions which could be implemented over the next 3-5 years. Critical strategic issues were identified in the following areas:

- *Effective Management Practices:* ADC lacks an effective system of management practices which has resulted in a diminishing ability to meet program needs, insufficient resources, inadequate support and guidance of operations, and a lack of strategic direction.
- *Control Techniques:* Control tools and techniques have not been adequately maintained or improved, and new methods which are more effective and socially defensible have not been developed, thereby limiting ADC's ability to control wildlife damage.
- *Management of Capital Assets:* Since being transferred to APHIS in Fiscal Year 1986, ADC has not systemically reinvested in major capital assets, ultimately resulting in reducing program delivery and safety.
- *Professional Credibility of Wildlife Damage Management:* Wildlife damage management has not been appropriately recognized as a critical component of wildlife management, resulting in a lack of professional and public awareness of the need for wildlife damage control as well as a lack of professional credibility of the ADC program.
- *Resource and Program Data Needs:* Critical data are lacking on wildlife damage and control actions, benefits, and impacts. These data deficiencies result in low levels of public understanding and acceptance, limit ADC program management and direction, and hamper protection of resources of concern.
- *Human Resource Management System:* ADC has not adequately recruited and developed personnel at all levels, resulting in critical shortages of personnel fully trained to meet program needs.

In response to these concerns, ADC has developed a strategy to meet the wildlife damage management needs of agricultural producers and the public. This strategy includes:

- *aggressively and systematically identifying those needs;*
- *maintaining a commitment to strategic and operational planning;*
- *proactively managing programs through more effective services, methods of delivery, organization, and personnel management; and*
- *expanding its role in wildlife damage management through more effective leadership.*

More recently, ADC has assembled a committee consisting of top management, state directors, district supervisors, ADC specialists, and knowledgeable outsiders, with representation spread throughout the U.S., with the charge of defining the future of ADC within the context of professionalism, program management, and methodology. Meeting in Lakewood, Colorado, in early August, this committee listened to presentations from representatives of ADC and APHIS as well as the International Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies, The Wildlife Society, the Animal Welfare Institute, the Humane Society of the United States, and the American Sheep Industry. Following these presentations, sub-committees spent the next two days defining future visions, identifying areas of concern and opportunities, and developing action plans in the areas of professionalism, program management, and methodology.

*Continued on page 2, column 2*

# CALENDAR OF UPCOMING EVENTS

**October 6-9, 1991: 5th Eastern Wildlife Damage Control Conference,** Sheraton Inn & Conference Center, Ithaca, New York. Technical sessions include: Wildlife Problems in Suburban Landscapes; Wildlife Problems in Agriculture; Wildlife Problems in Forestry; Health and Safety Issues; Economic, Social and Political Concerns; and New Techniques and Programs. Contact: Carol Rundle, Cornell Coop. Extension, Dept. of Nat. Resources, Rm. 108 Fernow Hall, Cornell Univ., Ithaca, NY 14853-3001.

*ATTN: NADCA will have the following activities in conjunction with the 5th Eastern Conference:*

**NADCA Directors' Meeting**
Monday, October 7, 7:30 - 8:30 a.m.

**NADCA Membership Meeting**
Tuesday, October 8, 7:30 - 8:30 a.m.

**NADCA Hospitality Room**
Tuesday, October 8, 5 - 5:30 p.m.
Featuring New York State Wines & Cheeses
*NADCA Members & Their Guests Invited*

**November 8-9, 1991: Symposium on the Eastern Coyote,** Fredericton, New Brunswick. For further information contact Arnold H. Boer, University of New Brunswick, Bag Service Number 44555, Fredericton, N.B., Canada E3B 6C2

**February 24-28, 1992: Ninth International Bear Conference,** Missoula Montana. For further information, contact L. Jack Lyon, Intermountain Research Station, P.O. Box 8089, Missoula, MT, 69807, phone (406) 329-3485.

**March 2-5, 1992: 15th Vertebrate Pest Conference,** Hyatt Newporter, Newport Beach, California. Contact: Dr. Terrell Salmon, Business Manager, c/o DANR-North Region, University of California, Davis, CA 95616-8575, (916) 757-8623; FAX (916) 757-8817.

**March 27-April 1, 1992: 57th North American Wildlife and Natural Resources Conference,** Radisson Plaza Hotel Charlotte and Charlotte Convention Center, Charlotte, North Carolina. Contact: L.L. Williamson, Wildlife Management Institute, 1101 14th Street NW, Suite 725, Washington, D.C. 20005. Two of the session at the conference will be "Wildlife Damage Management" and "Biological Diversity in Wildlife Management". For more information about the "Wildlife Damage Management" session, contact co-chair John P. Weigand, Fish, Wildlife and Parks Bldg., Montana State University, Bozeman, MT 59717-0322.

**September 13-16, 1992: International Conference on Avian Interactions with Utility Structures.** Will focus on avian interactions with powerlines, towers, buildings, and aircraft. Contact: Ed Colson, Pacific Gas and Electric Company, 3400 Crow Canyon Road, San Ramon, CA 94853.

*The Probe* is the newsletter of the National Animal Damage Control Association, published 10 times per year.

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Your contributions to *The Probe* are welcome. Please send news clippings, new techniques, publications, and meeting notices to *The Probe*, c/o Hopland Field Station, 4070 University Road, Hopland, CA 95449. If you prefer to FAX material, our FAX number is (707) 744-1040. The deadline for submitting material is the 15th of each month.

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## ADC - Defining the Future

Progress reports after two days of meeting indicated a strong sense of commitment, optimism, and, surprisingly, uniformity. "We thought it advisable in the very beginning to bring together individuals with a wide range of viewpoints about the ADC program and share their thoughts about the future as it impacts ADC," said Acord. "It is our opportunity to set the agenda for the future rather than be the victim of someone else's vision."

## *Futuring Input Requested*

The professionalism, program management, and methodology sub-committees of the ADC futuring committee are welcoming input. If you have something to contribute, contact the people listed below before 1 November 1991.

*Professionalism*
Don Hawthorne
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12345 W. Alameda, Suite 313
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*Program Management*
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Washington, DC 20090-6464
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*Methodology*
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Pocatello, ID 83201
(208) 236-6920

# —Animal Damage Control in the News—

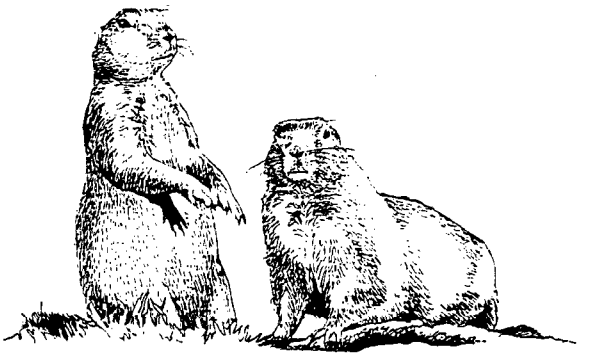
## PRAIRIE-DOG SUCKER-UPPER MAKING A "CLEAN SWEEP"

Like something out of a science fiction movie, the newest prairie dog control tool, a huge contraption called the "Dog Gone" "sucks 'em up and hauls 'em away" according to an article in a July issue of the *Denver Post*. Deemed safer, faster and cheaper than usual control methods by its inventor Gay Balfour, the "Dog Gone" resembles a massive vacuum cleaner. The rodents are literally sucked from their burroughs into a roaring 300-mph wind tunnel and find themselves deposited inside a truck with hundreds of their equally confused colleagues. This prairie dog's "nightmare from hell" has also been a hit with animal rights activists. "I'm all for it. It sounds like a really humane way to remove them," said outspoken Denver animal activist Robin Duxbury. According to the article, the idea for the "sucker-upper" came to Balfour in a dream. Balfour owns the Modern Welding and Machine Shop in Cortez, Colorado and he constructed the giant vacuumn machine himself. Cost of renting the machine is $125 per hour. The operators claim it clears about 20 acres a day, or 800 holes, each of which may contain two or three or more prairie dogs.

## CORMORANTS PLAGUE MISSISSIPPI DELTA CATFISH FARMERS

In a recent issue of *Smithsonian*, the feature article detailed the trials and tribulations of cormorants vs. Mississippi catfish farmers. Titled *Why catfish farmers want to throttle the crow of the sea*, the article reported that federal researchers last year examined the stomach contents of 136 cormorants taken in the Delta catfish farms and discovered that 64 percent of their diet consisted of catfish. "The fish farmers themselves estimate their direct losses at $3 million a year, plus $2.1 million for butane cannons and the like." Unfortunately, says the article, the problem may be self-perpetuating. The presence of the fish farms provide an unnaturally accessible food source—cormorants nesting in the Great Lakes region spend the summer in the Delta, flying north with a "half-inch layer of fat." Because of the parents' high nutrition level, all four eggs hatch—as a consequence, cormorant population levels in the Great Lakes are now showing increases of 15 to 63%. Author Richard Conniff believes that eventually, the cormorant population will naturally decline, under the pressure of "the balance of nature." In the meantime, researchers from the USDA/APHIS/ADC have been called in to examine the problem.

*The editors of* The Probe *thank contributors to this issue: Ron Thompson, Guy Connolly, James Forbes, and Wes Jones. Send your contributions to* The Probe, *4070 University Road, Hopland, CA 95449.*



## IOWA STATE SCIENTISTS STUDY LLAMAS AS GUARD ANIMALS

The Winter 90-91 issue of *Llama Life* reported that Dr. William L. Franklin of Iowa State University has begun research on the effectiveness of llamas as livestock guard animals. The study will determine not only the effectiveness of llamas as guard animals, but also investigate management and husbandry practices of ranchers using llamas, and specific characteristics of both successful and unsuccessful management programs and the llamas themselves. Llamas are already used by an estimated 100 to 150 ranchers in the United States. Franklin, and his graduate assistant Kelly Powell, spent this summer and will spend next summer interviewing and visiting sheep ranchers who use llamas to guard their flocks. The advantages of llamas, according to Franklin, appear to be their natural aggressiveness towards canines as well as the fact that they are a companion herbivore to sheep and thus can offer 24-hour a day protection. As a professor of animal ecology, Dr. Franklin has already undertaken extensive resarch on vicunas and guanacos in their wild habitats in South America. His photos and writing have appeared in the *National Geographic*.

## BUBONIC PLAGUE "ALL PART OF THE JOB" FOR TEXAS ADC TRAPPERS

ADC trappers in Texas are on the front lines in a little-publicized holding action against a disease that many people think disappeared with the Middle Ages. The dreaded "bubonic plague" is still very much with us, according to an article in the July 25 *Livestock Weekly*. Although risk to the general public is regarded as minimal, the article states that "...individuals can and do contract the deadly disease, primarily through contact with animal carriers in the brush." Plague-carrying animals were found in twenty-four Texas counties last year. Bubonic plague, if untreated, is fatal in 60 percent of the cases, so prevention is of utmost importance. That's where ADC comes into the picture. According to Extension information specialist Edith Chenault, the ADC program cooperates with the Texas State Health Department to track the disease. Trappers took 1600 blood samples last year from possible carriers and 162 tested positive for plague. Chenault reminds people that more than 100 million people died of bubonic plague in the Middle East in 542 A.D., 25 million died during the Black Death epidemic in Europe in the 14th Century, and 13 million in 1892 in China.

# The Bear Facts: the northeast Oregon experience

*Alan R. Armistead, USDA-APHIS-ADC, John Day, Oregon*

Just the thought of trying to control major predator problems in high visibility areas, on public land, is enough to give any experienced animal damage control specialist cold chills. When you add the problem of working sensitive species such as bear and lion, you have the makings of a potential gastric ulcer, not to mention numerous migraine headaches.

In Oregon, as in much of the west, black bears are thoroughly enjoying the recent status change from non-managed predators to game animals. Natural recruitment and limited hunting pressure have resulted in populations of bears reaching carrying capacity in most areas of prime habitat. Recent environmental awareness by the general public and special interest groups, combined with the natural shyness and large ranges necessary for these predators, have made increasing the harvest of surplus animals difficult if not impossible for game management agencies. Since prime habitat is limited, interspecific competition forces juveniles and dispersing adults into more and more marginal habitat, which results in an increase in human/wildlife contacts and conflicts.

The list of people that may become involved in handling one simple bear problem is unbelievable. The ADC specialist never really knows how sticky the situation will be until it is too late, unless he or she already has covered all the bases. In northeastern Oregon, ADC Specialist Ken Mitchell is the person who knows first hand where all the bases are.

Black bear, *ursus americanus*

The key to handling sensitive wildlife problems on public land is coordination between all involved agencies and individuals. Mitchell has tried a variety of techniques and methods in an attempt to alleviate damage problems and minimize program criticism. He has tried everything from the spank and release (qualifying for hazardous duty pay) to livestock guarding dogs that have taken up permanent residence under the herder's camp trailer after a few encounters with persistent bear or cougar. One of the more successful attempts to reduce damage to range bands of sheep was the recommendation and implementation of a spring bear hunt in the damage area. This method was successful in reducing the local bear population from sheep grazing allotments just prior to and immediately after spring turn out.

In an effort to reduce damage and at the same time reduce program criticism due to the increasing number of bears being destroyed each year because of damage problems, Mitchell decided to try a different approach. Using knowledge and documentation of damage from years past, he began a program of live-trapping with culvert traps. Areas were prioritized by the amount of bear damage occurring in the past. Several weeks ahead of the scheduled arrival of grazing bands on troublesome allotments, in an attempt to live-trap and relocate dominant resident bear, live traps were set in the direct line and routing of transient sheep bands. In addition, since troublesome bear often chase or harrass bands of sheep prior to actually killing, culvert traps were also set in these situations.

Captured bear were weighed, marked, and released in a previously agreed upon area where no livestock were present. A limited amount of areas were covered at any one time because of the number of culvert traps available and accessibility into remote damage areas. Other obvious drawbacks to this technique were that it was labor intensive and more expensive than solving damage problems by lethal control after damage had occurred. An appropriate release site must be available and, of course, coordination with and approval by the agency charged with management of the species was essential.

How well did the technique work? During 1990, sixteen bear were live-trapped and released and only one was destroyed (after being taken in equipment set for a depredating cougar). In 1989, five damaging bear were destroyed in the same area.

The only livestock in the area confirmed as bear kills occurred in areas where a culvert trap could not be used or within a designated wilderness area where no control was allowed. Under the circumstances it made no difference if the bear returned to original habitat, since the sheep would be gone from the area by that time. In 1991 the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife, U.S. Forest Service, and ADC continued using this technique, with some animals being radio-collared to determine their movement patterns and whether they returned to ranges where originally captured.

Mitchell has done an excellent job in developing an alternative to controlling bear damage in sensitive situations by non-lethal methods. It is up to the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife whether or not to provide funding and sufficient culvert traps to continue work with this technique or to go back to killing depredating bears. ADC developed this non-lethal strategy, which shows promise under the right conditions if the extra effort can be funded. This technique is not the answer to the problems with bear damage on livestock ranges, but may at least provide the public with an acceptable, effective alternative in some sensitive areas.

# Symposium at AIBS Responds to Ehrlich's Call for Removal of Livestock from Public Rangelands

An article in the August 1991, the *Trail Boss* (supplement to *Rangelands*) reported that Dr. Paul Ehrlich, Stanford University population expert, had called for removal of all livestock grazing from public rangelands. According to the *Trail Boss* article, Ehrlich had made the demand when he appeared on the "Today" show early last year. Ehrlich cited "serious environmental damage" caused by continued grazing as his reason for the request.

In response to criticism from the Society for Range Management and the American Society of Animal Science regarding his appearance, Ehrlich asked the two societies to prepare a symposium on the ecological aspects of grazing to be presented at the American Institute of Biological Sciences meeting in San Antonio, Texas, on August 6. Titled "Ecological Implications of Livestock Herbivory in the West," the symposium examined the impact of historical and current livestock grazing on rangeland ecosystems in the Great Plains, the Southwest, and the Intermountain West. It also examined the effects of grazing versus no grazing, riparian issues, and using livestock as tools to improve wildlife habitat. Other presentations focused on the future of grazing and how land management decisions are made, including the role of the public, special interest groups, and scientists.

"There is no doubt that heavy grazing in the latter half of the nineteenth century and the beginning of this century contributed to a decline in ecological conditions and a reduction of productivity on rangelands. However, several other ecological disturbances also occurred during the same period," said Bill Laycock, former Society for Range Management president and a range scientist from the University of Wyoming. Laycock organized the symposium with help from SRM members Rex Pieper, New Mexico State University and Marty Vavra, Oregon State University. Laycock indicated that demands for water quality and quantity, concern for native plant and animal species, and an emphasis on biodiversity have caused a reevaluation of land use practices.

# USDA/APHIS Administrator Resigns For Position as Dean at UC Davis

Dr. James W. Glosser, administrator of USDA's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service has resigned his position effective at the end of August. Glosser's resignation enabled him to accept a newly created position at the University of California at Davis. In his new position, he will serve in a dual role as a faculty appointee and as USDA representative in international agricultural health. Glosser's official title will be Assistant Dean in the School of Veterinary Medicine.

## NADCA LOGO CONTEST

***Win a fine set of predator calls from Lohman Manufacturing Co., an official NADCA hat with your logo embroidered on it, plus one year's prepaid membership in NADCA!***

**Send your logo sketch to Wes Jones, Treasurer, Route 1, Box 37, Shell Lake, WI 54871. The contest will close March 2, 1992. (All non-winning entries will qualify for a special drawing for an NADCA hat.)**

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## MEMBERSHIP INCENTIVE CONTEST
### Strengthen NADCA and win two ways!

**THE PRIZE** — A handsome 12-gauge automatic shotgun, Remington Model 11-87 Special Purpose, with ventilated rib and choke tubes. New for 1991 at a suggested retail price of $605! Shipped to a USA address.

**CURRENT MEMBERS** — The rules are simple — pass this page on to a person you believe should be a member of NADCA. If they submit a paid membership application using this page, your name will be placed in a group from which one name will be drawn for the prize. Two-page or double-sided photocopies are legal for multiple entries; the more you hand out, the more chances for you to win. The determining factor for members — check the expiration date on the mailing label on the reverse. If it isn't the current month or later, you better get out that checkbook pronto!

**NEW MEMBERS** — You have a chance to win a prize also; in fact, you have two chances if you sign up early! If your membership application is the one drawn for the grand prize above, you will be refunded the amount you paid for membership. Your second chance? New members signing up before the next mailing of this newsletter will then be "Current Members" as above, and will also be competing for the Grand Prize by recruiting additional members.

**CLOSING DATE** — The contest will close on March 2, 1992. The drawing will be at an open meeting at the 15th Vertebrate Pest Conference, Newport Beach, California.

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